What is social entrepreneurship?

"Just as entrepreneurs change the face of business, social entrepreneurs act as the change agents for society, seizing opportunities others miss and improving systems, inventing new approaches, and creating solutions to change society for the better."

http://www.ashoka.org/social_entrepreneur

The mission of the Middlebury Center for Social Entrepreneurship is to be a world leader in social change and development. Based on our conviction that social entrepreneurship education is integral to the 21st-century liberal arts, we offer students opportunities to reflect, to connect, to analyze, and to engage. Building on and complementing Middlebury’s commitment to educating students in the tradition of the liberal arts, our students learn to be effective agents of social change by reflecting on who they are, connecting with others, analyzing systemic challenges, and engaging the world around them. The center is designed to be a hub within a global network of schools, NGOs, government agencies, businesses, and foundations that share a commitment to creating 21st-century solutions.
Academic Courses
The MCSE began to take shape in winter term 2011, under the leadership of 21 students in Professor Jon Isham’s winter term course, 21st Century Global Challenges. In Winter Term 2012, 12 Middlebury students in Professor Isham’s Social Entrepreneurship in the Liberal Arts researched how social entrepreneurship education can enhance the mission of Middlebury College. In the fall of 2012, Professor Isham will teach a new first-year seminar, Social Entrepreneurship and Social Justice, and Assistant Professor Sarah Stroup and Executive-in-Residence Charlie MacCormack ’63 will co teach a new course, Private and Public Governances in the Era of Globalization.

Annual Symposium on Social Entrepreneurship
In January 2012, Middlebury launched the MCSE at our inaugural symposium. Bill Drayton, CEO and founder of Ashoka, opened the symposium with a speech on the importance of empathy and welcomed Middlebury as a new AshokaU Changemaker Campus. The second day included interactive workshops, presentations from 12 leading educators, and the keynote address by Jacqueline Novogratz, CEO and founder of Acumen Fund. The final day featured a workshop on social entrepreneurship education led by Gordon Bloom, founder of the Social Entrepreneurship Labs at Harvard, Stanford, and Princeton. The theme of the second annual symposium, scheduled for January 24–26, 2013, will be Social Entrepreneurship and Social Justice.

Friday Speaker Series and MLab
Held during the academic year, this weekly gathering has two parts: a lunchtime talk by a member of the college community or a visitor and a two-hour collaborative “MLab.” The lecture series is designed to offer Middlebury students a variety of insights on social change, lessons from the field, and career paths in social entrepreneurship. After each Friday talk, students lead the MLab, an interactive workshop in which they discuss ideas, pitch projects, and consult with peer mentors about available resources and possible next steps. In spring 2012, more than two dozen students used this weekly event to launch ideas and move forward with proposed enterprises.

Bread Loaf Forum on Social Entrepreneurship in the Liberal Arts
In June 2012, we hosted a forum on social entrepreneurship in the liberal arts. Staff and faculty from 17 colleges and universities gathered for three days to discuss goals for transforming their institutions. In June 2013, we plan to host a forum titled, Social Entrepreneurship in the Liberal Arts: What’s Working and What Isn’t?
In the spring, 23 groups of Middlebury students applied to our Social Entrepreneurship Grant Challenge with proposals for testing solutions to a range of social problems. Five were selected to launch their projects in summer 2012.

**¡Integrando a México!**
Andrea Cruz ’14, Fernando Sandoval ’15, Rebecca Hicks ’15, and Krisztina Pjeczka ’15 lead young changemakers in Mexico through community-service opportunities and workshops on conflict resolution, creativity, social issues, and civic engagement during a social entrepreneurship summer camp.

**GIS for Grassroots Health**
Hannah Judge ’12.5 and Anna Clements ’12.5 collaborate with Gardens for Health International (GHI), a small grassroots organization in Rwanda, to produce maps and conduct trainings that will enable GHI to reorganize and illustrate their data in a visually accessible way.

**Composting at Vergennes Union HS**
Sam Koplinka-Loehr ’13 and Eleni Polychroniadou ’14 work closely with the Vergennes Union High School to develop a comprehensive composting program that will process five tons of food waste annually. This system will function as an environmental education tool for VUHS high school students and community members.

**Crickeats**
Alex Bea ’12, Max Bacharach ’14, and Sebastian Schell ’14 are focused on finding an innovative way to offer relief for the nearly one billion people who face chronic food insecurity and the additional two billion who suffer from iron deficiency. Their solution: farming crickets to produce an energizing, highly nutritious protein bar.

**Aman Children’s Home and Development Program**
Biructait Seyoum ’13 and Evelyn Rotich ’13 maintain a shared vision and goal of caring for and empowering street children in their native cities of Dessie, Ethiopia and Eldoret, Kenya. They have created the Aman Children’s Home and Development Program, which provides eight children with a home, food, clothing, and school supplies.
Changemaker Campus

In September 2011, Middlebury was selected by AshokaU as a Changemaker Campus. This designation is offered to leading institutions in social innovation education that “share the vision for higher education to become the next global driver of social change by transforming the educational experience into a world-changing experience.” Middlebury’s partnership with Ashoka connects us with leading global educators and social entrepreneurs. In July 2012, the MCSE was invited to help choose the next cohort of Changemaker Campuses. Currently there are 19 campuses in the Changemaker network.

Fellowship Program

In fall 2012, we will unveil a fellowship program for selected Middlebury students. Fellowship recipients will become a cohort during their sophomore year; during their next two-and-a-half years at Middlebury, they will learn collaboratively and give back to the community. The program will include enrollment in a winter term course, integration of social entrepreneurship into academic work, pursuit of relevant summer experiences, and leadership in social entrepreneurship activities on and off campus. The fellows will receive two summers of funding: an experience in a structured organization during the first summer and a self- or group-designed project during the second summer.

High School Program

We plan to implement a high school program on social entrepreneurship at Middlebury Union High School during the fall semester of 2012. By fall 2013, we aspire to award grants annually to high school students at selected schools worldwide, a program in which current Middlebury students will act as active mentors.

International Opportunities

In close partnership with Ashoka, we hope to foster a long-term relationship between the MCSE and Middlebury’s many schools abroad by establishing social entrepreneurship curricula for study-abroad and local students. In the fall of 2013, we plan to launch this collaboration at several Middlebury schools abroad.

Learn More

For more information, visit http://mcse.middlebury.edu or contact Heather Neuwirth ’08, Associate Director for Operations and Development, Middlebury Center for Social Entrepreneurship, at 802.443.5961, hneuwirth@middlebury.edu, or at 118 S. Main St., Middlebury, VT 05753.